DSBs are investigated by the Oil Marketing Companies and appropriate action is taken as per the guidelines laid down by the Government.

Outstanding dues of oil companies

1625. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that outstanding dues of oil companies from oil pool account are soaring;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what steps are being taken to clear the dues; and

(d) what steps are being taken to cut down the operational cost of oil companies in view of global recession?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The estimated oil pool deficit as on 31-3-2000 and 31-3-2001 was around Rs. 6,256 crore and Rs. 12,600 crore respectively.

(c) The management of the oil pool account is a continuous process and the strategy to manage the same depends *inter alia* on various factors *viz.* the prevalent international prices of crude oil/ petroleum products, exchange rate, duty structure, domestic selling prices of controlled products (motor spirit, high speed diesel, kerosene for public distribution and domestic LPG) etc. The oil pool deficit is monitored by the Government and appropriate action is taken from time to time.

(d) Various steps taken by oil companies to reduce operational cost include rationalization of manpower, upgradation of technology, energy conservation, reduction in input cost, improvement in productivity etc.

Reduction of subsidy on Petroleum Products

1626. SHRI DINA NATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the volume of subsidy for the current financial year on kerosene oil, public distribution system and domestic LPG going by the current trends;

(b) whether Government are contemplating the reduction of subsidy on these items; and

(c) what would be the size of oil-pool deficit by the end of current financial year as per the Ministry's assessment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Due to the fluctuations in the prices of crude oil, kerosene and LPG in the international market and the rupee-dollar exchange rate, the total amount of subsidy on kerosene for public distribution and domestic LPG for the current financial year cannot be realistically estimated at this stage.

(b) The Government decisions of November 1997 on the phased dismantling of administered pricing mechanism (APM), envisage the subsidy on the LPG for domestic use and kerosene for public distribution to reach at level of 15 percent and 33.33 percent of the import parity, respectively effective 1.4.2002 to be met from the fiscal budget of the Government.

(c) The size of oil pool deficit by the end of current financial year being dependent *inter alia* on various factor *viz.* the international prices of crude oil/petroleum products, exchange rate, duty structure, domestic selling prices of controlled products (motor spirit, high speed diesel, kerosene for public distribution and domestic LPG) etc. cannot be realistically assessed at this stage.

New LPG connection to self help groups

1627. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1066 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 31st July 2001 and state:

(a) whether LPG connections would be given for distribution through ladies self help groups for other neighbouring States also; and

(b) if so, what is the basis of allotment and who has to pay the deposit amount?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The facility of release of LPG connections against surrender of kerosene quota is available for all States. The security deposit of LPG equipments is to be borne by the customers as per the prevailing deposit rates, in case State Government do not bear the same.